



Opening Statement

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Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Committee on Homeland Security

“Preventing Waste, Fraud, Abuse and Mismanagement in Homeland Security – A GAO High-Risk Review”

Remarks as Prepared

While the Department of Homeland Security’s mission is critical, it is also critical that it keeps its finances in check, because in order to protect the homeland we must maximize every dollar spent.

Almost as soon as the Department’s creation, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) placed some of DHS’s programs on its “High-Risk List,” and today, many remain. This List is developed every two years by the watchdogs at GAO to identify areas in the federal government that are at high risk to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement or are in most need of broad reform, and it is intended to draw attention to these areas to force agency leaders to improve.

Unfortunately, some of the programs identified include some of the Department’s core functions such as acquisition management, financial management, information technology, human capital, and management integration, as well as, multi-agency challenges such as information sharing and cybersecurity.

While the Department has devoted time to addressing GAO’s High Risk areas, these reports continue to show examples of programs ignoring best practices and putting taxpayer dollars at risk. Recent GAO findings have identified challenges with the Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan, TSA body scanners, modernization of a key border enforcement system known as TECS, and the Department’s acquisition funding plans. All levels of DHS must be fully committed to making the Department more efficient and effective.

To this end, this Committee has taken action to address specific issues highlighted in GAO’s High Risk report. H.R. 3696, the National Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, and H.R. 4228, the DHS Acquisition Accountability and Efficiency Act—both passed out of this Committee

unanimously—are important pieces of legislation to increase our Nation’s cybersecurity and improve the Department’s management of its acquisition programs. Additionally, our recent bipartisan report on the Boston bombings highlighted the need for improved information sharing, which addresses another High Risk item.

Finally, while I am encouraged by the steps DHS has taken in recent years to address these issues including achieving a clean audit opinion in 2013, there is clearly much more work to be done. In the short time since they’ve assumed their new positions, Secretary Johnson and Deputy Secretary Mayorkas have both already endeavored to fix the management problems at DHS, and today I look forward to hearing more from them on his plan for improving the Department. However, assurances from the top and putting plans in place only go so far. It will take time and follow-up and continued oversight to ensure improved outcomes are sustained over multiple years.

To that end, I look forward to Comptroller General Dodaro and recently confirmed DHS Inspector General Roth’s testimony today. Their recommendations to make DHS a more effective and efficient organization are essential to making Americans safer. Ultimately, every dollar wasted on mismanagement is one less that can go to the men and women protecting our borders, targeting terrorists, securing our airports, and patrolling our shores. That’s why this hearing, and DHS’ commitment to getting its house in order, is so important.

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